



Richmond/Hampton Roads Passenger Rail Study

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

Fall 2004

Connections

Your information link to news about the Richmond/Hampton Roads Passenger Rail Study

This is the first in a series of newsletters that will provide an update on a study being conducted by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT). DRPT is studying the feasibility of implementing improved passenger rail service from Richmond to Hampton Roads, providing rail connections to the Southeast, Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions as an extension of the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor (SEHSR) — ultimately connecting to cities including Charlotte, Washington, D.C., Boston and New York. This edition is intended to give you information about the study kick off, a summary of feedback gathered at the first set of Citizen Information Meetings and an update on the study process. We hope you will join us for the next set of public meetings scheduled for November 16, 17 and 18, 2004.

Could Higher Speed Passenger Rail Service Be in Your Future?

Ever wonder what it would be like to forget the highway traffic, hop on a fast moving train and travel from Hampton Roads to Richmond connecting to Washington D.C., New York or Boston? The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation is examining the possibilities. Hampton Roads, Richmond and points in between may one day be connected with higher speed passenger rail service. Highways in our region and airports along the Eastern seaboard cannot handle the present traffic volumes, nor accommodate future travel needs. Higher speed rail service may be the solution that offers an affordable, modern, timely alternative to driving on crowded interstates or flying short distances.



Artist's rendering of Main Street Station, Richmond, Virginia.

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Join Us for Our Next Citizen Information Meetings

Alternatives Development Meetings

Open House with the Study Team: 4-7 p.m. ■ Formal Presentations: 4:30 p.m. and 6 p.m.

November 16 Newport News

City Center Conference Facilities
James and Warwick Rooms
700 Town Center Drive

November 17 Norfolk

Norfolk Airport Hilton
Ballrooms C&D
1500 North Military Highway

November 18 Richmond

Main Street Station
1500 East Main Street



During the Alternatives Development Meetings, the study team will present the first round of proposed railroad locations that address the transportation needs within the study area. The rail locations and evaluation criteria were developed from citizen and government agency participation during the public meetings held in the spring of 2004.

The study team needs your input as we move forward to evaluate and narrow these options. If you require special assistance to attend and participate in these

meetings, please call 48 hours in advance of the meetings – 1-877-742-4247.

For directions to the meetings, please visit www.rich2hrrail.info

What's Next?

Following the November public meetings, this study will proceed to Phase 2 in the study process:

Phase 2: Alternatives Development (We are here)

Phase 3: Alternatives Analysis

Phase 4: Tier I Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS, Public Hearing).

Phase 5: Tier I Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD)

(Phases 3, 4 & 5 will be completed pending funding.)

Future phases: Engineering, Right of Way Acquisition, Construction, Operation

During the Alternatives Development phase, the study team is developing alternatives based on past planning activities, relative costs, community input and other financial issues. At the conclusion of Phase 3, Alternatives Analysis, a document will be distributed for comment and DRPT will recommend a Preferred Alternative for evaluation in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Following public and agency review of the Draft EIS, the study will be further refined and mitigation measures finalized. During preliminary engineering a Final EIS will be prepared. Following receipt of environmental clearance from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and funding commitments, the study would be advanced into right of way acquisition, final engineering design and construction.

Study Kick Off Meetings Provide Opportunity for Public Discussion

More than 250 interested citizens attended the first set of Citizen Information Meetings held in March 2004. These meetings were held to gather input from the public and government agencies and were the first step in the public involvement process.

At the meetings, the study team presented information from previous technical studies, outlined the study process and provided a forum for the public to share their ideas and concerns. Comments about the issues and needs most important to citizens were collected. The study team also sought feedback regarding potential impacts (environmental and community) that should be assessed during the study.

Meeting attendees were invited to review displays, maps and literature as well as talk to members of the study team. Team members provided an overview of the study area and corridor options that follow the Richmond to Petersburg to South Hampton Roads Corridor and the existing Amtrak Corridor from Richmond to Williamsburg to Newport News. The preliminary railroad locations were derived from past corridor studies and provided a base from which to build.

Here's what we heard:

In response to the presentations at the initial public meetings, a wide variety of comments were received including comments on regional transportation, traffic conditions, technology/speed recommendations, alignment alternatives, station locations, neighborhood impacts, environmental issues, cost effectiveness and public involvement strategies. Numerous inquiries were made regarding the status of a third crossing through Hampton Roads and its ability to support a transit alternative.

Reasonable alternatives and modifications suggested by the public and representative agencies have been incorporated. The study team has reviewed the following alternatives and found that they continue to merit further analysis.

Preliminary Alignment Alternatives:

- **Peninsula/CSX Alignment** (Richmond to Newport News Corridor)
- **James River Alignment** (Richmond to Newport News to Norfolk Corridor)
- **Southside-Norfolk Southern Alignment** (Richmond to Petersburg to Norfolk Corridor via Norfolk Southern)
- **Southside-US 460 New Alignment** (Richmond to Petersburg to Norfolk Corridor via new US 460 Corridor)

The Past, Present and Future of Higher Speed Rail Service

The Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor (SEHSR) is part of a plan by the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) and Amtrak to develop a nationwide high speed rail network. The 1992 designation of the SEHSR, of which this corridor is a part, is one of the five national high speed rail corridors. It is significant because it allows for federal monies to be spent on improvements to the existing rail system in order to achieve high speed service. Additionally, a 1997 USDOT report identified the SEHSR Corridor as the most economically viable high speed rail corridor in the country.

The State of Virginia conducted an Interstate 64 Major Investment Study (MIS) between Richmond and Newport News in the late 1990s that included a conceptual analysis of intercity rail alternatives. The study recommended the widening of Interstate 64 and also recommended that rail service be upgraded by double tracking the existing CSX rail lines, increasing passenger train speeds to 110 mph, and increasing frequencies to eight round trips per day.

In 2002, DRPT completed another study examining the feasibility of running high speed rail between Richmond and South Hampton Roads via Petersburg along the U.S. Route 460 Corridor. The Study recommended comparable improvements to the existing Norfolk Southern rail lines.

The Richmond/Hampton Roads Passenger Rail Study is building on the previous studies and will explore the feasibility and desirability of higher speed rail service between Richmond and the Hampton Roads region with linkages to other cities and states to the north and south.



Study Area Map

The study area generally follows the Richmond to Petersburg to South Hampton Roads Corridor and the existing Amtrak Corridor from Richmond to Williamsburg to Newport News. This rail service would serve as an extension of the SEHSR Corridor. The map depicts the Richmond/Hampton Roads Passenger Rail Study area.



- +—+—+— Peninsula/CSX Alignment (Richmond to Newport News Corridor)
- +—+—+— James River Alignment (Richmond to Newport News to Norfolk Corridor)
- +—+—+— Southside-Norfolk Southern Alignment (Richmond to Petersburg to Norfolk Corridor via Norfolk Southern)
- +—+—+— Southside-US 460 New Alignment (Richmond to Petersburg to Norfolk Corridor via new US 460 Corridor)

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What are the potential benefits of high speed rail?

- A.** High speed rail can offer social, economic and environmental benefits including energy savings, emission reductions and maximized use of existing rail corridors. Supporters of high speed rail point to the long-term growth in America's population, income, travel demand and congestion in intercity transportation by air and auto.

Q. How would Hampton Roads connect to high profile U.S. cities?

- A.** There are five high speed rail corridors authorized by Congress under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and six under the 1998 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) for a total of eleven corridors. To date, the U.S. Department of Transportation has designated ten corridors and numerous corridor extensions. Two corridors of importance to this study are:
- Amtrak has 150 mph train service, known as "Acela" which operates in the Boston-New York-Washington Northeast Corridor.
 - In 1992 the U.S. Department of Transportation designated the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor connecting Charlotte, NC, Richmond, VA, and Washington, DC. This corridor designation has been extended south to Northern Florida through subsequent actions of the Department. In 1995 the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor designation was extended from Richmond, VA to Hampton Roads, VA.

Q. Will the Study select only one corridor between Richmond and Hampton Roads?

- A.** The Study will analyze the feasibility and desirability of passenger rail service on both sides of the James River. A conclusion that rail service is needed on both sides of the river has not been precluded.

Meet the Study Team

Technical representatives from agencies and local governments are participating with the study as part of a Technical Working Group. This group meets to provide technical advice and insight to the study team. Technical Working Group members include representatives from the following organizations and local governments:

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
 Federal Railroad Administration-High Speed Rail
 Amtrak
 CSX Transportation
 Greater Norfolk Corporation
 Hampton Roads Transit (HRT)
 Norfolk Southern Corporation
 Virginia Department of Transportation
 Hampton Roads Planning District Commission
 Crater Planning District Commission
 City of Chesapeake
 City of Colonial Heights
 City of Hampton
 City of Newport News
 City of Norfolk
 City of Portsmouth
 City of Richmond
 City of Suffolk
 City of Surry
 City of Virginia Beach
 City of Williamsburg
 Chesterfield County
 Henrico County
 Isle of Wight County
 James City County
 New Kent County
 Prince George County
 Southampton County
 Surry County
 Sussex County
 York County



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Stay Involved

Visit the study web site at
<http://www.rich2hrrail.info>
for detailed information about the
Richmond/Hampton Roads
Passenger Rail Study.



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We want to know what you think about possible passenger rail service in this area. We encourage you to attend the Citizen Information Meetings in November and provide comments online or by mail. A comment form can be downloaded from the web site: www.rich2hrrail.info. Mark all correspondence to the attention of:

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Richmond, VA 23218-0590

**For more information call the
Citizen Information Line
877-742-4247 (877-RICH2HR).**